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SIPDIS

STATE FOR ECA FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY PATRICIA
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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OEXC](#) [OIIP](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#)

SUBJECT: FIRST EVER IFTAR WITH MOZAMBIKAN ISLAMIC
LEADERS

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: Maputo PAS organized an Iftar at the Ambassador's residence that took place the final Friday of Ramadan, November 12. Nine prominent local Muslim leaders, representative of several different communities of Mozambique's sizeable Muslim minority, were invited and attended, including clerics, businessmen and NGO activists. After the Ambassador spoke, one of the most prominent Muslim clerics in Mozambique gave unprompted remarks for several minutes thanking the Ambassador for taking the first steps to bridge the divide between the local American and Muslim communities. END SUMMARY.

NINE MUSLIM LEADERS

[1](#)2. The nine attendees included: Aminuddin Mohammed, president of the Islamic Congress of Mozambique who writes a weekly religion column in "Savana", an influential independent weekly; Cassimo David of the Mozambican Council of Theologians, a former International Visitor participant; other business and NGO representatives from both Mozambique's Asian Islamic community and native Macua community; and two key figures in Muslim women's groups. Embassy representatives met with most of the invitees prior to the event to put the outreach efforts into context.

EMBASSY ZAKAT DONATIONS

[1](#)3. On the morning prior to the Iftar, the Embassy delivered food baskets as a "zakat" offering to ten poorer mosques located in Maputo and surrounding areas. The baskets included bulk quantities of staple foods such as corn meal. Mission personnel visited the mosques in advance of the delivery to make contacts and arrange logistics. They followed up with personal delivery of the baskets, which included a card to the leader of each mosque.

IIP'S "MUSLIM LIFE" SUCCESS

[1](#)4. While guests were arriving, PAS played an abridged and translated version of IIP's "Muslim Life in America" slideshow. The slides, while not provoking questions immediately, helped set an upbeat, respectful tone for the rest of the evening. During supper, the PAO engaged in a conversation with a high school teacher of Arabic and the Koran, who had studied for seven years in Libya. The teacher admitted to having been uncomfortable with the idea of attending the Iftar and was defensive about his Libyan education. He specifically noted his appreciation of the slideshow, however, and proceeded to ask about American Muslims.

IMAM SPEAKS, WELCOMES IFTAR GESTURE

[1](#)5. The Ambassador presented prepared remarks welcoming the guests; she noted her own previous experience in predominately Muslim Morocco and underscored the historical role that Islam has played in Mozambique. Immediately afterward, Mohammed gave several minutes of unprompted remarks, thanking the Ambassador for taking the first steps to bridge the divide between the local American and Muslim communities. To be sure, his comments had a modest political overtone, acknowledging his (and the local Muslim community's) disagreement with certain aspects of American foreign policy without going into specifics. Nevertheless, he reiterated his receptiveness to the positive message conveyed by the Iftar.

A MISSION-WIDE EFFORT

[1](#)6. The Iftar, though coordinated by PAS, resulted from the combined efforts of the Mission. Personnel from several sections of the Department of State and USAID, Mozambican and American alike, gave freely of their time and experience to make this unprecedented event work. From day one of planning, the Ambassador communicated the significance of outreach, a message reinforced consistently throughout the planning process. Perhaps the most important element turned out to be the extraordinary contributions of several Muslim members of the Mission, whose advice and judgment proved critical.

17. COMMENT: By any measure the Iftar was a success. The mere fact that our carefully selected guests appeared at all at this first-ever Embassy Iftar would be one measure of success. But more happened: a key imam's unprompted generous acknowledgment communicated the respect with which the Muslim community viewed the Ambassador's gesture, no small feat. In the process, the Mission made a number of excellent contacts and generated significant goodwill, helping to reduce tensions between the communities.

LA LIME